

REVIEW OF SURVEYS ON
EURO-MEDITERRANEAN RELATIONS,
AND AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
ELITE SURVEY IN MEDRESET

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ABSTRACT

With the dramatic changes in the political sphere of the Mediterranean countries, new challenges have emerged in the existing framework of relations between the EU and its southern neighbours. In order to thoroughly understand how the EU practices have affected the Mediterranean countries, and identify the outcomes of the adopted policies, MEDRESET introduces the Elite Survey within its Work Package 3, which will enable us to explore Euro–Mediterranean relations through fieldwork in selected countries. The survey findings will serve as background to develop alternative visions for a more inclusive partnership between the EU and the Mediterranean. In consideration of this, the present paper is devoted to the conceptual and methodological framework of the MEDRESET Work Package 3, which incorporates the Elite Survey and its design into a relevant scope of research. To this end, the paper reviews existing surveys conducted in the Mediterranean in order to define the current outlook. It also identifies the gaps in these studies to discuss how the Elite Survey can contribute to the existing literature through the fieldwork data, and details the analytical framework and methodology for the survey.

INTRODUCTION

Countries within the Mediterranean basin and its surrounding area have long been a region of special global importance and the locus for a number of political, economic and social changes over the last decades. The impacts of these transformations will obviously remain visible for years to come. As the severity of the crisis is growing much worse, the response policies by major powers like the European Union (EU) continue to affect the region's geopolitical dynamics.

It seems, however, hard to avoid the fact that the status quo in Euro–Mediterranean relations is unable to adapt itself to regional developments, as shown by a considerable amount of academic literature examining this deficiency from different angles (Tozzi 2007, Balfour 2012, Spencer 2015).

According to certain critical studies, one of the underlying reasons behind this failure lies within the Euro-centric orientation of EU policies "characterized by a narrow geopolitical construction of the Mediterranean" (Huber and Paciello 2016: 3). In defining actors, policy instruments and policy issues from an exclusively European standpoint, marginalizing the perspectives and needs of regional states and people becomes a significant factor behind this inefficiency

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(Huber and Paciello 2016: 3).

In line with this view, MEDRESET aims to study how the EU and South Mediterranean countries perceive each other, in an attempt to develop alternative visions for a new Euro–Mediterranean partnership and corresponding EU policies. As stated in the concept paper, the study findings will be investigated to design “a future role for the EU as an “inclusive, flexible, and responsive actor in the region” (Huber and Paciello 2016: 3).

To achieve this, the need for a *non-Euro-centric* approach emerges as a crucial factor in designing new policies; this in turn will which require further multi-dimensional and multi-layered research on recent social and political dynamics in the region. Such research will enable MEDRESET to analyse the social, political and economic factors with significant impact over the Mediterranean countries by considering their dynamic, transformative and heterogeneous characteristics (Huber and Paciello 2016).

In line with this, the present paper sets out to examine the data of the existing surveys and studies with a specific focus on Euro–Mediterranean relations as well as the Middle East and North Africa region to better measure the developments, the progress and also the failures that have taken place so far. The paper is structured in five main parts starting with the current Introduction section which is followed by the objectives of Work Package 3 (WP3), including a semi-structured survey at the elite level in the region. This section continues with the review of previous research, and then moves to the research scope and methodology design for WP3.

1. OBJECTIVES OF WORK PACKAGE 3 (ELITE SURVEY)

Introducing an integrated research design, MEDRESET is built on three main phases as given below:

1. The first phase focuses on the EU's construction of the Mediterranean and attempts to assess how the EU frames the region through discourse and policy analyses.
2. The second phase is dedicated to the Mediterranean actors, and delves into current dynamics in the region. This phase analyses how different stakeholders in the region practice their own “Mediterranean” and construct their own understanding of geopolitics. Aside from general perspectives, this part will also include analyses on specific policy areas through rigorous field research.
3. The third phase will provide a broad assessment of EU policies and their effectiveness in the region, while mapping the key stakeholders in the region and providing a gender perspective on the overall assessment.

Work Package 3 (Elite Survey) falls within the second phase of the project and fundamentally will focus on the local actors at the senior level. The Elite Survey fieldwork will cover Iran, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Israel, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. Apart from their geographical location and significance, the abovementioned countries are chosen due to their relevance to and influence over the social, political and economic developments within the regional dynamics (Huber and Paciello 2016: 10). To this end, the Elite Survey will provide comprehensive country-specific analyses and assessments of multiple stakeholders' perceptions and expectations not only towards EU policies and Euro–Mediterranean relations

but also their own understanding of the "Mediterranean region" or the "Arab World". The findings of the Elite Survey will be introduced and discussed in extensive country reports.

In giving in-depth consideration to Euro–Mediterranean relations, the Elite Survey will address three main sets of research questions:

1. Is the elite discourse in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) region resisting or reproducing the EU's construction of the region? How do elites perceive European policies in the Mediterranean area? How has their perception towards the EU changed over the years?
2. How do elites perceive the Mediterranean region? Who are the most important stakeholders on the domestic, regional, and international levels? How are the "structure" and the nature of interactions changing in the region? What are the current main geopolitical challenges?
3. What major policy issues do the elite deem most pressing? In which particular areas would substantial cooperation with the EU and/or other MENA countries prove beneficial? More broadly, in which policy areas would a regional/bilateral approach hinder/yield success? (MEDRESET 2016)

In addition to this, it is important to note that the analyses in WP3 will benefit from the findings of MEDRESET's WP1 and WP2, and also contribute to the subsequent WPs. In WP1, the EU's construction of the Mediterranean region is examined and the findings provide space to assess the existing differences and/or similarities between the perceptions of the elites and the EU.

On the other side, WP2 specifically takes on eight non-EU countries including Russia, China and the United States (US) on the external level; and Israel, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Qatar on the regional level. This WP looks at how these countries construct the Mediterranean in their official discourse, which in return provides comparative data for the Elite Survey in WP3.

Overall, the Elite Survey will seek to identify the specific policy areas portrayed as crucial by the local actors. This perspective will contribute to the subsequent research in WPs 4 through 7, which will analyse specific policy areas through bottom-up perspectives. Before discussing the methodology design for the Elite Survey, this paper will look at the relevant existing surveys to determine how WP3 can contribute to the literature on the EU's policy-making efforts vis-à-vis the region.

2. A REVIEW OF PREVIOUS SURVEYS

This section of the paper presents an overview of the existing academic literature on Euro–Mediterranean relations in three main parts, with a focus on the perspectives of the MENA towards EU policies and the European role in the region with its successes and failures.

Data from large-scale quantitative and qualitative surveys conducted in the MENA countries as well as relevant studies are provided to define the policy issues along with the social and political challenges in the post-Arab Spring period. The existing findings provide valuable data for use in preparation of the interview questionnaire for the Elite Survey.

2.1 PERCEPTION OF THE EU IN MENA

Since the establishment of the 1995 Barcelona Conference followed by the launch of European Neighbourhood Policy in 2004 and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in 2008, the bilateral agreements between EU states and the Mediterranean countries have targeted the enhancement of relations in political, social and economic realms. On the multilateral level, the six priority projects introduced by the UfM cover different cooperation areas under the themes of "Civil protection", "Higher education and research", "Mediterranean Business Development Initiative", "De-pollution of the Mediterranean", "Maritime and land highways" and "Alternative energies" through regional and sub-regional initiatives (Council of the European Union 2008, Donnini and Mazzocchi 2010: 10).

However, the Union's priorities directed to the Mediterranean have markedly changed following the major transformations starting from 2010, and its political and social leverage in the region seems to be fading, according to the studies and survey data. This shift can be discussed in two main aspects: the perception of the EU's soft power and the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

ASSESSING THE EU'S SOFT POWER STRATEGY IN MENA

The soft power tools – including support for development programmes, closer political and economic ties, and public diplomacy – that the EU has adopted over the years have been reliant on cultivating regional partnerships, both internal to the region and with the EU. The EU's soft power strategy in the MENA region has widely rested on cooperation on energy, security and migration as well as trade agreements, civil society initiatives and political or economic pressure.

The perception of the EU as a "civilian power" in the region, however, draws ire in two main points: the susceptibility to foreign influence and the policies driven mainly by the Union's own strategic interests (Metawe 2014). This criticism shows up itself in two qualitative surveys carried out between late 2009 and early 2010 in Egypt and Jordan and from late 2013 to 2014 (Metawe 2014). Demonstrating key perceptions on the effectiveness and autonomy of the EU foreign policy in the region, the surveys took the form of in-depth interviews, which explored a number of topics including the Iraq War, the Iran nuclear issue, the US influence on EU foreign policy, Western imperialism and the post-Arab Spring consequences.

Both surveys demonstrate that while the EU was generally viewed as more positive and equal, it was also perceived as an ineffective actor on the ground, with foreign policies that mostly revolved around those of the US. In this respect, it would not be wrong to claim that the EU's soft power strategies should be reviewed not as "charitable or palliative alternative", but "as a necessary and proactive corollary to the reactive logic of the currently failing policies of Europe and the US towards the Arab world" (Spencer 2015: 219).

ENP UNABLE TO MEET THE REGION'S NEEDS

With the rising threat of international terrorism and the regional crises sweeping the Middle East, the EU states have seemed to reduce their commitment to the southern Mediterranean part, and the Arab Spring is also notable for the EU's failure to foresee the social upheavals

(Youngs 2015). The EU's responsiveness to the region's regressing security, economic and political environment have also received "downbeat evaluations" from some analysts (Youngs 2015). The EU's inefficiency shows itself in the 4th Euromed survey, which was carried out with the experts from the EU and Mediterranean countries in 2013. A majority of the respondents were expecting that the Arab Spring would have positive impact on Euro-Mediterranean relations (Lannon 2013: 44). In terms of political and security cooperation dynamics, the survey analysis indicates that the issue of resolution of conflicts as being one of the objectives of the European Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) has been described as an issue which requires further attention (Florensa 2013).

The fact that the EU-Mediterranean relations have lost drive also appears in the results of the 6th Euromed Survey of Experts and Actors by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed 2016). To review the ENP and identify the factors where the ENP is unable to offer adequate solutions in the Mediterranean, the survey was conducted among 760 experts and actors from the member countries of the UfM in 2015. What stands out in the survey that the EU is unable to respond to southern partners' expectations and should "address security and economic challenges more forcefully" (IEMed 2016: 86). Respondents have also identified migration/mobility and addressing security threats as two priorities that should be dealt within the ENP framework. A majority of respondents (56 percent) have identified "working with partners on the prevention of radicalisation, the fight against terrorism and organised crime" as the main areas to be further developed under the category of "addressing security threats" (IEMed 2015).

Likewise, the 5th Euromed survey carried out in 2014 with 838 opinion leaders, experts and major actors from the Mediterranean world demonstrates that "the influence of the EU as peace broker is considered low or very low" (IEMed 2014: 21). Examining the domestic and geopolitical transformations in the region, the results indicate that the positive impact of the EU actions showed a slight downturn compared to 2012, while negative (low) impact increased by 13 percent (IEMed 2014: 22).

These two surveys suggest the need for a change in approach towards the security threats in the region. There is an underlying assumption that the EU should be one of the actors taking a better stance on regional security crises, migration and preventing radicalization.

2.2 PERCEPTION OF EU POLICIES IN KEY SECTORS

As mentioned earlier, the EU's general policy towards the MENA region is to encourage political and economic reforms in each country, and to support regional cooperation. The construction of this regional perspective goes back to the first steps taken by the EU at the 1995 Barcelona Conference, which can be described as a preliminary attempt to establish the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. The core areas of this partnership include peace, stability, human rights and democracy as well as prosperity, free trade, social development, effective civil society and increase in cultural exchanges between the two sides of the Mediterranean (Samir and El Kenz 2005: 84). However, with the developments such as the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada resulting in a worsening of Israeli-Palestinian relations as well as the eruption of the US-led Iraqi War in 2003 and other conflicts, the Mediterranean has become a region where the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership are unrealizable (Güney 2008: 127).

Starting from 2010, the Arab uprisings formed a turning point for relations between the EU and the MENA region. Measuring the political, economic and social attitudes in six MENA countries including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya in the post-Arab Spring period, the ArabTrans survey finds a disconnection "between what the EU may believe it is achieving in the MENA region, and local perceptions of the failure of its influence and impact" (ArabTrans 2016a: 2).

The ArabTrans survey, which was carried out within the Arab Transformations Project (ArabTrans), was a multi-stage probability public opinion survey with a sample of residents aged 18 years and over. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in each of the countries in Arabic by trained interviewers in 2014. "The research shows that it [EU] has failed to respond to popular demands and has instead produced greater economic polarisation, ongoing political marginalisation and *de facto* support for authoritarian regimes. [...] These failures have been a deeper undermining of the EU's reputation as well as increasing pressures on migration", the project summary reports (ArabTrans 2016a: 2).

Another criticism addresses the EU's security-centric approach in the migration crisis, where the focus is on border controls, return and readmission instead of ensuring the practice of fundamental human rights. "A policy mainly focused on security approach driven by EU and Member States' interests will damage EU's image abroad and will pose fundamental obstacles over foreign affairs and wider international relations" (Carrera et al. 2015: 21).

EU states took a similar stance in the past, showing support for undemocratic rulers for the sake of border control. "Controlling the border went hand in hand with the repression of citizens and the deportation of third-country nationals, often in violation of human rights" (Fargues and Fandrich 2012: 14). Promoting democracy in principle, but prioritizing security and stability policies in the region seems to lower the EU's credibility in the eyes of experts and the public.

MIGRATION STRONGLY CHARACTERIZES THE MENA REGION

Migration is another major source of concern in the region, particularly following the reshaping of the region's political and social landscape. The Arab uprisings and subsequent developments have accelerated the migration in the southern Mediterranean with "outflows of migrants and refugees [fleeing] instability and violence" mainly in Libya and Syria (Fargues and Fandrich 2012: ii).

A 2016 opinion poll undertaken by the Anna Lindh Foundation in eight European countries and five southern East Mediterranean countries through face-to-face and telephone interviews indicates that migration "strongly" characterizes the region (Anna Lindh Foundation 2017: 3). Similar findings on migration also appear in the ArabTrans survey, which demonstrated that over one third of the respondents considered living abroad, although a majority might migrate to another country for a temporary period (Abbott and Teti 2017: 5). "The main reason people give for considering migration is economic. The exceptions are Iraq and Libya: in Iraq security reasons are more important [...]. In Libya, security and education are more important factors than the economy. Political reasons account for only a tiny proportion – just three per cent", the report further states (Abbott and Teti 2017: 6).

At present, the EU appears to be re-implementing its previous position on migration in the Mediterranean region, with a focus on controlling the external borders of Europe. On the European side, no significant move towards a policy of resettlement in Europe has yet taken place. The burden of migration crisis rests largely on the shoulders of neighbouring Arab states and Turkey, along with the support provided by international organizations, civil society and local people.

The respondents in the ArabTrans survey suggested that special attention should be given to the risk of producing unfavourable side-effects when designing policy responses to the current refugee and migration crisis. The resolution of the migration and mobility crisis remains one of the most important expectations for the EU, in the eyes of the southeastern Mediterranean countries, according to the findings of the 6th Euromed survey data (IEMed 2016). The survey participants similarly highlight that the current migration crisis points to further need for policy revision.

EU LESS EFFECTIVE IN DEMOCRATIZATION

Prior to the Arab uprisings, the support for democracy was high throughout the MENA region, as reported in the 2006 Arab Barometer surveys (Jamal and Tessler 2008: 98). In the wake of the Arab Spring, a similar perception prevailed among the public. The face-to-face public opinion surveys carried in nine countries across the MENA region by Arab Barometer from 2010 to 2011 and from 2012 to 2014 reported that within that period "at least three-quarters of citizens [...] said that a democratic political system, including public freedoms, equality of political and civil rights, and accountability of authority, represents a good or very good type of system" (Robbins 2015: 81). Furthermore, the findings suggest that many people "believed that they lived under a hybrid system that was only moderately more authoritarian than democratic in nature" (Robbins 2015: 84). In the survey's second wave, respondents across the region tended to rate their regimes "no more or less democratic than had been the case in 2011" (Robbins 2015: 85).

When it comes to the EU's role on democratization, the findings of the ArabTrans survey demonstrate that people in Morocco, Libya, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq "have a low opinion of the EU's claims to be a 'normative actor', to facilitate democratization and development, or even to be a force for stability in their region" (ArabTrans 2016b: 7).

It is also worth noting that the EU's engagement in the Arab Spring countries is committed to help them in democracy-building and achieving sustainable economic growth (Salah 2013). On this point the EU's pursuit of good relations with Egypt's military-backed regime after the 2013 coup is connected to political and economic mutual dependencies, paving the way for increased acceptance of the new regime (Mühlberger 2015: 4-5).

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION ON SPECIFIC POLICY AREAS

The Mediterranean region is of importance to the EU not only in political terms but also for improving cooperation initiatives on certain policy areas. It is therefore relevant to discuss the impact of the EU initiatives and programmes in other key policy sectors, including agriculture and water as well as energy and industry in the MENA region. Starting with the agriculture sector, the EU's attempts to liberalize agriculture in the Mediterranean seem to be unable to

bring satisfactory results, particularly due to slow progress and European protectionism, as shown in the 2nd Euromed survey (Abis 2011: 187). The "competition risks" and "the lack of public willingness within the EU" emerge as the two main challenges in opening up agricultural trade to the Mediterranean countries (Abis 2011: 187). Factors such as "destabilisation of family farmers, aggravation of food dependency, crisis in rural areas and heightened pressure on natural resources" are some of the potential risks posed by this process (Abis 2011: 189).

In addition to this, concerns over the future of environmental challenges have brought the need to introduce a common strategy for water sector management and the de-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea. It appears that this issue is at the core of the UfM initiatives. Looking at the survey results on the priority of water cooperation, the respondents concentrate on its significance in the region (Ferragina 2011: 192). Based on the survey results taken from certain qualitative reports, water management has a great importance in the Mashreq countries. The results indicate that the respondents from these countries tend to consider water as a matter of survival and a source of political instability, and they expect more involvement of the EU in the political dimension of water management issues (Ferragina 2011: 192).

Aside from the need for more effective and sustainable agricultural trade and water management, the promotion of sustainable development in the energy sector has also been reviewed in survey studies such as the 2nd Euromed survey, which was carried out in 2010. Around half of the survey respondents reported progress on energy initiatives in infrastructure extension, investment nuancing and research development (Bahgat 2011: 200).

A comparative look at the Euromed surveys, which were conducted in 2009 and 2012, demonstrates that the perception towards economic cooperation between the EU and Mediterranean countries in the long run is recorded as positive (Florensa 2013). According to the survey respondents, within the context of UfM priorities, the policy areas "Money", "Market Access" and "Mobility" have relatively similar importance (Lannon 2013: 48).

An emphasis on economic development as the greatest priority area for cooperation is identified in the 6th Euromed survey (Franco 2016).

Nearly half of all exports from Mediterranean countries for the period between 2004 and 2010 was directed to the EU, which highlights the significance of the EU's trade role for the region (De Wulf 2011: 149). Although Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements were in force with almost every southern Mediterranean partner, the process of implementation has taken a gradual and progressive approach which has resulted in disappointing progress, as explained by the experts interviewed within the 6th Euromed survey (IEMed 2016). Overall, socio-demographic, economic, sanitary, cultural and environmental challenges all come into play when discussing the geopolitical dimension of this area of cooperation.

2.3 PERSPECTIVES ON KEY ISSUES IN MENA IN THE POST-ARAB SPRING PERIOD

The Arab uprisings have had significant political and social repercussions in almost every part of the MENA region. The reflections of this turbulence are perceived differently at state, society and economic levels; however, the general perception is that security situation, quality of life as well as public services have severely deteriorated (ArabTrans 2016a: 2). In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, freedom from political marginalization, the delivery of a fairer society through

greater social justice, and the ability to participate in economic development are described as some of the fundamental expectations (ArabTrans 2016a: 1).

At the state level, the crisis of legitimacy in Arab states is still visible seven years after the uprisings. The problems of government legitimacy, local concerns and democratic prospects are voiced by the region's political thinkers as well as former state officials. According to the Arab World Horizons Project, a wide-scale survey by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, authoritarianism, the lack of governance and accountability are some of the acute problems from the experts' perspective. The surveyed experts express their high dissatisfaction with their governments and there is a consensus among respondents on the need for prioritizing local political and economic challenges over regional and geopolitical problems (Cammack and Muasher 2016). Similarly, there has been a visible decline in confidence in the government notably in the Arab Spring countries, with the public being more favourable to democracy in the aftermath of the uprisings, as shown in the World Values Survey 6th wave (Gengler 2014).

The ongoing challenges are apparently not limited to the problems in governance but extend to the social sphere, as reported by the region's youth. An annual youth survey exploring the attitudes of Arab youth in MENA countries reveals that "confidence among Arab youth that the Arab Spring would bring positive change across the region is declining" and as a result they "are uncertain whether democracy could ever work in the Middle East" (ASDA'A 2015: 8). In the 2016 edition of the survey (ASDA'A 2016), the respondents said that the biggest obstacles sweeping the region are unemployment, lack of democracy, rising cost of living and civil unrest. A significant portion of the respondents want "their leaders to do more to improve their personal freedom and human rights" (ASDA'A 2016: 29). The survey findings also suggest that the lack of jobs and opportunities is the main recruitment driver for terrorist groups like ISIS (ASDA'A 2016: 13).

On this point, it is necessary to examine the economic outlook of Arab Spring countries, which has remained uncertain in the aftermath of the uprisings. The Arab Barometer surveys demonstrate that in the surveyed MENA countries, "more than half of all respondents placed the need for 'improving economic conditions' among the trio of main causes of the demonstrations. In Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Tunisia, the figure clustered around 70 percent" (Robbins 2015: 87).

As far as the region's economy is concerned, the relation between economic satisfaction and politics should be also considered. The Pew global survey on discontent with politics indicates that there is a strong correlation between political satisfaction and economic attitudes. Countries where people state that the economy is doing poorly are more likely to be unhappy with their current political system. The Middle Eastern countries are among the most dissatisfied groups within 31 surveyed countries. The survey also states that the people with higher income in these countries have more impact on politics (Pew Research Center 2015).

Taken together, this section has attempted to provide a brief literature review on the existing surveys covering Euro-Mediterranean relations and the MENA region. As most of these surveys were designed to reveal the main challenges that the region suffers from as well as the responses targeting each issue, they do not treat the underlying reasons for the problems in much detail. In other words, it appears there is a need to introduce a comprehensive work investigating Euro-Mediterranean relations, that goes beyond describing the problems to

explore what these countries are dissatisfied with, which would be more useful in drafting effective response policies. Thus, the following section will be devoted to the research framework and the methodology of the Elite Survey in the MEDRESET project intended to achieve this objective.

3. RESEARCH SCOPE OF THE ELITE SURVEY

A review of the existing surveys and studies on Euro–Mediterranean relations reveals two major strands of research design. While one group of research relies on the data drawn from experts' views either through in-depth interviews or structured questionnaires, another group aims to reach citizen-level data mostly through quantitative opinion polls.

Fitting within the former strand, the Elite Survey is designed as a “qualitative” questionnaire that will allow the project researchers to carry out in-depth interviews. Compared to the previous surveys, this study attempts to provide new insights into the subject by referring to the opinions and assessments of a selected interviewee profile from the MENA region while asking them their demands and expectations from the EU, which is crucial for the policy-making process. The survey will provide data at a regional and country level with an attempt to address certain policy issues like migration and mobility and political ideas, as well as agriculture/water and energy/industry – which could be described as an added value of the project. In addition, the Elite Survey will further define the priority areas for near-future cooperation.

This research will provide up-to-date data based on a multifaceted and multidimensional research design with reference to the available literature on Euro–Mediterranean relations, with the aim of also encouraging further studies in this field.

Within the research scope, local experts from different political and social segments will be targeted in each country to provide inclusive and qualitative assessment of perceptions. Following this line of reasoning, this study intends to cover a wide spectrum of opinions which goes beyond the official rhetoric to focus on domestic reflections of the EU policies as well as the points of divergence in approaches towards the region.

The Elite Survey will be designed in such a way as to address the key policy issues that MEDRESET covers. It will introduce an investigative look at the region's geopolitical dynamics and how the EU responds to them. Among the main themes that the Elite Survey be dealing with is the security issue. The survey will try to answer how and to what extent the EU should handle the security crises and conflicts in the region through response mechanisms. Previous surveys (e.g., 4th and 6th Euromed surveys) put emphasis on the prevention of radicalization and the fight against terrorism by means of effective collaborative mechanisms that the EU should construct. Through in-depth interviews, the Elite Survey will try to examine what kind of regional security architecture local experts envisage to manage the security threat in the region. It will also try to determine the extent to which the EU should intervene in domestic conflicts, and encourage further thoughts on policy design.

Another theme that the Elite Survey will investigate is migration and mobility, which has been worsening since the onset of the Arab Spring. As the previous studies suggest, the key drivers behind migration include concerns over economy and security. The EU's policies (or lack of

policies) on migration seems to be the main criticism directed at its foreign policy, which is perceived as mostly concerned with safeguarding its own national security. The critics point out that the EU's border control policies may become a tool of domestic repression, with much stronger security forces in the Mediterranean countries, even though the practice may appear on the surface as regular border control. This is a good example of the side-effects of EU policies in the region, which will be examined during the Elite Survey interviews. In this way, the survey will seek to offer a more comprehensive insight into the EU's foreign policies in the region.

When it comes to the debates on democratization, the interviews will introduce a detailed examination to understand how elites construct democracy and what they think about the challenges that need to be addressed from that perspective. Apart from the individual understanding of democratic values, in-depth interviews will open space to assess the appeal of democracy at a country and regional level. Here, examining the EU's partnership areas at the social, public and economic level could be also helpful to understand what has been done so far and what needs to be done for the future.

The Elite Survey will also provide data on local elites' expectations about further cooperation initiatives described as crucial for the countries in the region. Trade partnerships, economic cooperation and integration projects have become essential for the progress and stability of the countries in the region, considering the slowing economic development and decrease in foreign direct investment rates since 2011 due to ongoing migration crises, concerns over energy resources and environmental threats, as well as sectarian conflicts.

In addition to the abovementioned themes, the Elite Survey will try to address specific policy areas including energy/industry and agriculture/water, which will be extensively covered in WP5 and WP6 through interviewing relevant stakeholders in these fields. Using this integrated approach will make it possible to generate data on issues that have been less examined in surveys, although covered to a certain extent.

The Elite Survey will use a semi-structured questionnaire format to generate detailed data. The researchers will employ qualitative interviewing, which is more appropriate for opinion surveys because it makes it possible to acquire insights on future plans, expectations and motives. The questionnaire format will be largely the same for each country, in order to allow comparisons between countries.

The questionnaire will have three main sections starting with questions on how the EU is perceived in the region, the effectiveness of the EU at the state and civil society level, and cooperation at both the regional and the country level. This section will be followed by questions on key issues in the Mediterranean and a section with country-specific questions, which incorporates questions for each target country to understand its internal dynamics as well as demands and future prospects. Overall, the questionnaire will include a standard set of questions applicable to all target countries, as well as particular questions pertinent to each country to capture the intricate context of the country in question (MEDRESET 2016).

4. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Looking into the case studies conducted on Euro–Mediterranean relations, it appears that the concepts most used are heavily reliant on Western theories of international relations and comparative politics, which do not incorporate local perspectives and perceptions (Ferabolli 2014). This has resulted in the marginalization of other perspectives and findings of other stakeholders that are outside of these norms. The lesser use of reflexive methodology has resulted in a lack of in-depth and qualitative knowledge on the South Mediterranean countries (Bayoumi 2007: 346-7, Krüger and Ratka 2014).

This gap is what the Elite Survey attempts to fill by bringing local perceptions to the forefront through the use of reflexive and qualitative methodology. This section of the MEDRESET project will focus on perception analysis of the local elites within a qualitative assessment context. Perspectives towards the EU's role and policies targeting the region will be explored through semi-structured interviews, which will be carried out with the local elite actors in each country. Furthermore, because the Elite Survey will rely on in-depth and face-to-face interviews, it will provide a different and much more comprehensive dataset compared to the existing opinion poll surveys.

Another distinctive feature of the Elite Survey will be its outreach to the perspectives of relevant senior-level local experts. It is important to clarify the term "elite" considering that it may have different meanings in different contexts. "What distinguishes elites from non-elites is not job titles and powerful positions but the 'ability to exert influence' through 'social networks, social capital and strategic position within social structures'" (Mikecz 2012: 485, citing Harvey 2011: 433). During the selection of the local elites, their influence over the policy making processes or institutions will be set as the main criterion. However, it should also be noted that elites are "clustered in different parts of the societal network" (Woods 1998: 2105); thus, not only political influence but also social, economic or civil influence will be evaluated. During the interviews, a thorough assessment of the elite discourse will be taken into consideration to see possible contrasts between the dominant discourse of the EU and the elite discourse in the target country. Critical discourse analysis (Milliken 1999) can be incorporated into the research, wherever the need arises.

The Elite Survey interviews will be conducted with local agencies at the elite level in Iran, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Israel, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. Target groups will comprise bureaucrats, decision makers, political advisors, business people, youth, women, leading academics, official (mainstream) media members and leading civil society representatives in each country. Rather than providing a large-scale bottom-up perspective, this section of MEDRESET will target perception analyses of the developments that have emerged in the region with a special focus on EU policies. The bottom-up perspective will be explored in detail within defined policy areas rendered crucial for the region in the subsequent MEDRESET Work Packages (WP4–7).

The methodology of WP3 will pursue a gender-sensitive approach, "which ensures that women[']s and men[']s voices and viewpoints are represented" and "attribute[s] equal value to analy[s]ing and understanding men[']s and women[']s perspectives of the investigated issue and in adopting the framework and defining the approach and methodology of the process" (Ghosheh 2017). In line with this, the approach taken will incorporate gender-related issues as

much as possible, and the data reporting will try to present women's and men's perspectives in such a way as to avoid "dominance of one voice over the other", which might diminish the credibility of the analysis from a gender perspective (Ghosheh 2017).

In terms of methodological difficulties of conducting elite surveys, intensive pre-interview preparation is essential. Gaining access, trust and establishing rapport are instrumental in obtaining the personal interpretation of events by elite interviewees (Mikecz 2012). Before the interviews, the researcher should be knowledgeable on the research topic and have sufficient knowledge on the interviewees' culture, background and norms of behaviour. These preparatory steps will facilitate gaining the trust of the interviewee, and will make it much easier to evaluate the interviewee's responses.

Purposeful sampling method will be incorporated within this research. This methodology will allow us to make confident generalizations from the study sample to a larger expert population. The selection of interviewees will be designed in consideration of, first, their influence over the social, political and civil networks and second, their experiences and/or current and past official roles, as well as their accessibility. Sample size will depend on the insights generated from the fieldwork. The validity and meaningfulness of the qualitative data will be evaluated in terms of the information-richness of the selected interviewees (Patton 2002).

The project team will work on draft lists for interviewees, targeting at least 8 to 10 interviews for each country. The researcher will decide according to the quality of the data collected whether further interviews are required. Depending on the field conditions, when and if necessary a snowballing technique to reach interviewees may be also used. In relation to the recent diplomatic and security landscapes within each country, the Work Package leader will first contact the relevant country embassy to introduce the project and research team and get in touch with the relevant officials from the foreign ministries. In cases where the project team's network is deemed insufficient to contact higher-level politicians or bureaucrats, or due to security concerns, the project team might consider working with local experts to reach interviewees and conduct targeted interviews within the field. Wherever possible, the elite survey will be sensitive to integrating gender perspectives within the selection of interviewees.

A qualitative interviewing method will be implemented for data collection in the Elite Survey. Qualitative methods are "highly personal and interpersonal, because naturalistic inquiry takes the researcher into the real world where people live and work, and because in-depth interviewing opens what is inside people". Correspondingly, "qualitative inquiry may be more intrusive and involve greater reactivity than surveys, tests, and other quantitative approaches" (Patton 2002: 407, see also Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009).

A semi-structured interview guide will also be prepared beforehand that will cover the list of questions or issues that are to be explored during each interview (Patton 2002). A semi-structured (interview guide) method enables the interviewer to feel free to explore, probe and ask questions that illuminate specific topics during an interview. It gives the interviewer space to establish a conversational style, which in turn encourages the interviewee to actively join the conversation. Adopting a semi-structured interview methodology will enable interviewees to say what they feel is relevant and important to them without being constrained (Bray 2008: 309-10). This approach permits greater flexibility and individualization, and also opens up the possibility that more information will be collected than intended (Patton 2002).

As previously mentioned in the introduction section, interviews for the Elite Survey are planned to take place in nine different countries as well as in three or four different languages and accents. The research will employ a cross-cultural interviewing method which requires special sensitivity and respect for differences. In terms of the language differences and cultural meaning of special terms, the project team will work with local experts if and when necessary when composing the questionnaire or its translation.

During the interviews, field notes will be prepared to provide contextual background information on the interview. Field notes are "the fundamental database for constructing case studies and carrying out thematic cross-case analysis in qualitative research" (Patton 2002: 305). They will consist of descriptions of what is being experienced and observed, quotations from the people observed or interviewed, the researcher's feelings and reactions to what is observed, and field-generated insights and interpretations. Briefly, they should contain everything the researcher believes to be worth noting. Regarding the wide scope of the Elite Survey work package and the high number of interviews projected, the field notes will prove highly valuable for the data analysis part of the research.

The formulation, ordering and scaling of questions for each country will be of great importance for the Elite Survey. In addition to the standard set of questions applicable to all of the countries under scrutiny, specific questions will be added to the questionnaire that are of relevance to the particular country. Questions will be prepared as neutral, without using technical or specialized jargon and wording will be kept simple and clear (Bray 2008: 309-10).

Ethical standards and guidelines of the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme will be rigorously applied, regardless of the country in which the research is carried out. The Elite Survey will be carried out in compliance with the items listed in the MEDRESET Data Management Plan:

Complying with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, the European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, as well as with the Opinion on Anonymisation Techniques of the European Data Protection Working Party, adopted on 10 April 2014, MEDRESET commits to respect and preserve the full anonymity and the individual rights of all participants, in particular of those who could be susceptible of discrimination because of their identity or beliefs. As a way to protect and preserve the identity and privacy of the research participants and in accordance with the Regulation (EU) 2016/679, personal information and data gathered in the interviews, the elite surveys and RMSCs will be fully anonymized [...]. The information will be kept by the researchers who have acquired it. (MEDRESET 2017)

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